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AN ADVANCED COURSE FOR THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The American section of the International Lesson Committee has issued a syllabus of an Advanced Course of Sunday School Lessons. The event is of such significance that we feel justified in occupying the necessary space for the reprinting of the list of the lessons and passages. It is as follows:

THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF JESUS

I. THE SUPREME STANDARD.

1. Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matt. 5:43-48; Luke 6:32-36.

II. THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL COMMANDS.

2. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Matt. 22:34-38; Luke 10:25-27; 11:42.
3. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Matt. 22:39, 40; Luke 10:25-27; 6:31. Compare I Cor., chap. 13.

III. SPECIAL PRECEPTS (growing out of the Two Fundamental Commands).

A. THOU SHALT NOT TRESPASS (Negative, repressing evil).

a) *By Sinful Desires, Thoughts, and Purposes.*

4. An Evil Heart. Mark 7:20-23; Matt. 15:18, 19; Luke 6:43-45; Matt. 5:27-30.
5. Anger and Revenge. Matt. 5:21-26, 38-48; Luke 6:27-36.
6. Covetousness. Luke 12:13-21; Mark 10:17-31.
7. Selfish Ambition. Mark 9:33-37; 10:35-45.
8. Anxiety, as dishonoring God. Matt. 6:19-34.

b) *By Sinful Words and Deeds.*

9. Censoriousness. Luke 6:37-42; Matt. 12:33-37.
10. Lying. Matt. 15:19; John 8:39-46; Luke 22:54-62.
11. Swearing and Blasphemy. Matt. 5:33-37; 26:62-64; 12:24-32.
12. Formalism and Hypocrisy. Mark 7:1-13; Matt. 23:1-39.

c) *By Sins of Omission.*

13. Sins of Omission. Matt. 25:41-46; 7:21-27; Luke 19:20-26.
14. Review.

B. THOU SHALT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS (Positive, developing virtues).

15. Humility. Matt. 5:3, 5; Luke 14:7-11; John 13:1-17; Luke 17:7-10; 18:9-14; 22:24-30.
16. Gratitude. Luke 17:11-19; John 6:11; 11:41; Luke 24:30, 31.
17. Forgiveness. Matt. 6:12-15; 18:15-35; Luke 17:3, 4; 23:34.
18. Mercy and Sympathy. Matt. 5:7; Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 25:34-40; 18:23-34.
19. Patience and Endurance. Matt. 5:10-12, 38-42; 10:22; 26:62-68; Luke 23:8-11, 34-36.

20. Courage. Matt. 10:16-39; Luke 4:16-30; John 11:7-16; 15:20, 21; 16:33.

21. Review.

C. THOU SHALT RENDER LOVING SERVICE (Positive, love in action).

a) *To God.*

- 22. Repentance and Faith. Mark 1:14, 15; 11:22-24; Luke 13:1-5; 15:1-32; John 14:1. Compare Acts 20:21.
- 23. Reverence and Worship. Luke 4:8, 16; John 4:19-24; Luke 18:43; 6:12; 22:40-46.
- 24. Work for God. John 4:34-38; Matt. 5:13-16; 9:35-38; John 5:17; 9:3, 4; 17:4; Matt. 28:18-20.

b) *To Men in All the Relations of Life.*

- (1) In the *Family*.
- 25. Conjugal Love and Faithfulness. Mark 10:2-12.
- 26. Parental Love. Matt. 7:9-12; Luke 15:20-24; Mark 10:13-16.
- 27. Filial and Fraternal Love. Luke 2:41-51; John 19:25-27; Mark 7:9-13; 10:19; John 1:41, 42; Luke 15:25-32.
- (2) In the *Church*.
- 28. Christian Fellowship and Loving Service. Matt. 18:15-20; 20:25-28; 23:8-12; John 13:34, 35; 17:20, 21.
- 29. Review.
- (3) In the *Community*.
- 30. Loving Service to Personal Friends. Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-44; 15:13-15; Matt. 26:37, 38.
- 31. Kindness to Personal Enemies. Luke 6:27-38; Matt. 5:38-48. Compare Rom. 12:17-21.
- 32. Helping the Destitute and the Suffering. Matt. 6:2-4; Luke 12:33, 34; 14:12-14; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 20:35.
- 33. Service in Reforms. John 2:13-17; Luke 7:36-50.
- 34. Duties of Employers and Employees. Luke 6:31; Matt. 20:1-16; 24:45-51; 25:14-30.
- (4) In the *State*.
- 35. Patriotism and Good Citizenship. Matt. 22:15-21; Luke 19:41-44; John 18:1-13.
- 36. Peace. Matt. 5:9, 21-26, 38-42; 26:47-56; John 4:7-9, 39-42. Compare Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:6, 7; 11:6-9.
- (5) In the *World*.
- 37. Seeking and Winning Lost Men Everywhere (Christian Missions). Matt. 9:35-38; 28:18-20; Acts 1:3-8.
- 38. Review.

IV. SOME UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES.

39. Whosoever Loses His Life for Christ's Sake Shall Find It. Mark 8:31-38; Matt. 10:37-39; 20:22-28; John 12:24, 25.

40. Responsibility Measured by Privilege and Opportunity. Luke 11:29-32; Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 12:47, 48; John 15:22-25.

41. Fidelity the Prime Quality in the Discharge of Obligation. Luke 19:11-27; Matt. 24:45-51; 25:14-30.

42. An Unworthy Motive Vitiates Good Works. Matt. 6:1-18.

43. Duties Never Conflict. Mark 2:23—3:5; Luke 13:10—17; Mark 7:6—13; Matt. 10:34—37; 22:15—22.
44. The Sanctions of the Moral Law Are Eternal. Matt. 13:36—43, 47—50; 10:28—33; 16:26; 25:46.
45. Review.

V. AIDS TO THE PERFECT LIFE.

46. New Life through the Holy Spirit. John 3:1—21.
47. Moral Fruitfulness Dependent upon Union with Christ. John 15:1—17; 14:20—23; 17:20—23.
48. The Inspiration of the Perfect Life of Christ. John 1:14—18; 8:46; 12:35, 36; 17:19; 18:23. Compare Heb. 4:15; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:21—25; I John 2:6; 3:2, 3.
49. Prayer an Aid to the Perfect Life. Matt. 6:5—15; Luke 11:1—13; 18:9—14; 5:21; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28, 29; 22:40—46.
50. Victory over the Tempter through the Word of God. Matt. 4:1—11; John 8:31, 32; 17:17.
51. Constant Help from the Holy Spirit. John 14:15—31; 16:7—15.
52. Review.

The issue of this optional course is a distinct step in advance on the part of the American members of the International Committee. It is perhaps doubtful whether the present moment is the most opportune for such a step. The regular lessons for 1907, dealing with the patriarchs and judges of the Old Testament, are of such a character that it is precisely the advanced classes of the Sunday school that can deal with them most successfully; it is the intermediate classes that most need relief. But, whatever the special reasons, we welcome the alternative course as an earnest of the committee's purpose to recognize the principle of adaption of material selected to the different grades of pupils.

In the preparation of this list of subjects and passages the committee evidently labored under the difficulty created by the necessity of making fifty-two lessons, and did not altogether escape it. But this can hardly justify what we can but regard as the infelicitous main classification or grouping of the subjects, or the departure in the case of many of the specific subjects from the point of view of Jesus as clearly indicated in the passages cited. The whole scheme has an unpleasant appearance of having been controlled too much by what the framers of the lessons wanted to find for the pupils, too little by the point of view and purpose of Jesus. The result, as we judge, is that the lessons are really less adapted to the needs of the pupils than if more care had been taken to discern the mind of Jesus.

To be more specific, is it wise to begin the whole series of lessons by setting forth the perfection of God as the supreme standard? Will not the subject introduced at this point lack that concreteness which is necessary

to make it effective for teaching purposes, and which it would possess if placed after the special precepts? What is the difference between "Fundamental Commands" (II) and "Underlying Principles" (IV)? Why should one precede and the other follow "Special Precepts"? The apparent unity of Group IV seems artificial and imposed upon the material rather than found in it. The passages cited under 39 set forth a fundamental ideal of ethical life, and deserve to be grouped with the passages cited under II, 2, 3. The title of 42 is a generalization of Jesus' teaching in the passages cited which quite departs from his point of view. What he is teaching is that men should do their acts of righteousness unstentatiously, as in the sight of God, not for the sake of gaining the praise of men. That duties never conflict is a good practical maxim, but it is only remotely suggested by Jesus' teaching concerning the sabbath set forth in Mark 2:23—3:5, and suggests a wrong point of view for all the passages cited under 43. And how does it happen that a subject so prominent in Jesus' teaching and so practical in today's life as the sabbath is never mentioned?

But the most serious fault we find in the treatment as a whole is the legalistic cast which has been given to it. It is true, indeed, that Jesus often speaks in the imperative: "Give to him that asketh of thee," "Judge not that ye be not judged." But that fact is far from warranting a systematic statement of Jesus' teaching in a form which suggests to the student that Jesus was a legalistic scribe who gave to the world a new list of Thou-shalt's and Thou-shalt-not's. Nothing is farther from the truth. Nothing is more calculated to give the pupils a false impression of the spirit and point of view of Jesus as an ethical teacher. So serious does this error seem to us that we venture to commend these lessons for use in advanced classes only with the proviso that the teacher systematically correct them in this respect.